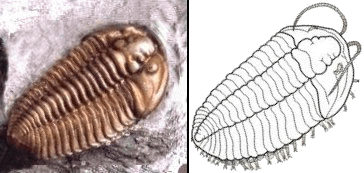
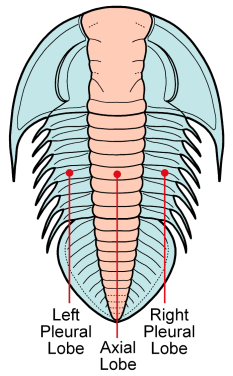
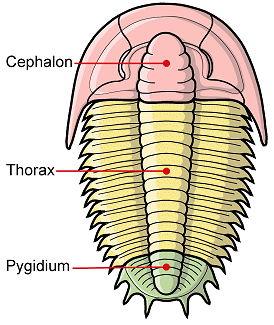
**Trilobite Reading**

**(Yellow/Green)**

Trilobites are remarkable, hard-shelled, segmented creatures that existed over 520 million years ago in the Earth's ancient seas. They went extinct before dinosaurs even came into existence, and are one of the key creatures of the Paleozoic Era. During this time, there was an increase in the number of the complex life forms that helped create life as it is today. Although dinosaurs are the most well known fossil animals, trilobites are also a favorite among those familiar with Paleontology (the study of the development of life on Earth), and are found in the rocks of all continents.



ANCIENT ARTHROPODS   
Trilobites were among the early arthropods, a group of hard-shelled creatures with multiple body segments and jointed legs (although the legs, antennae and other finer structures of trilobites only rarely are preserved). They are extinct, but once contained over 20,000 species. New species of trilobites are discovered every year in fossils. They show a great deal of variety in size and form. The smallest known trilobite species is under a millimeter long, while the largest include species from 30 to over 70 cm in length (roughly a foot to over two feet long!). Most trilobites are about an inch long, and part of their appeal is that you can hold and examine an entire fossil animal and turn it about in your hand. Try that with your average dinosaur!



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| THE TRILOBITE BODY PLAN  Whatever their size, all trilobite fossils have a similar body plan, being made up of three main body parts: a [cephalon](http://www.trilobites.info/cephalon.htm" \t "_blank) (head), a segmented [thorax](http://www.trilobites.info/thorax.htm" \t "_blank), and a [pygidium](http://www.trilobites.info/pygyterms.htm" \t "_blank) (tail piece). However, the name "trilobite," which means "three lobed," is not about those three body parts, but the fact that all trilobites bear a long central axial lobe, and on each side, right and left pleural lobes (pleura = side, rib). |  |

http://www.trilobites.info/